

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH ARMY MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM
"BURKE" GARRETT III, COMMANDING GENERAL, U.S. ARMY AFRICA, VIA TELECONFERENCE
SUBJECT: HIS COMMAND'S NEW ROLE AS THE ARMY COMPONENT TO U.S. AFRICA COMMAND
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RYAN DILLON (SETAF public affairs officer): Okay, good. All right,
well what I'd like to do is introduce Major General William "Burke" Garrett III,
who is the commander of Southern European Task Force, U.S. Army Africa. And if
you saw on today's, the topic statement, he'll be discussing SETAF's new role as
the Army Component to United States Africa Command.

With that I'll turn it over to General Garrett who can go ahead and
open.

Q Okay. Hello? Q Hello?

Q Hello?

Q Yeah.

Q Is the General there?

Q Something happened. Is there General there?

Q I think they hung up.

Q I think they might've too.

Q This is great.

Q Well isn't it the rule that if you don't have any real news you
just make it up? You know, we could all write about the American plan to
Christianize Africa by using the Ethiopians.

Q Hello?

MR. DILLON: Hey this is Ryan Dillon. We got cut off. So are we back
on?

Q Yeah, we can hear you now.

MR. DILLON: Has Jack entered or anyone else since we got cut off?

Q Don't think so.

MR. DILLON: Okay. All right. Well we will now try again and I'll turn it over to General Garrett for opening remarks.

GEN. GARRETT: Okay, hello everybody. Can you hear me? Hopefully you can. If not, if I'm coming in too faint just give me shout and I'll speak up.

Thank you all for your interest in SETAF and especially in our new role as the Army Component to U.S. Africa Command. We're kind of dual-hatted right now. We still use the old title of Southern European Task Force but more frequently now we use the other hat we wear, the other title which is U.S. Army Africa. And just to be clear, we are not AFRICOM. We are U.S. Army Africa. And there's been some interesting confusion about that over the past few weeks.

But let me give you first some background on SETAF, tell you about our new mission, and then again as I mentioned, our transformation into U.S. Army Africa, discuss for just a minute what the future holds for SETAF and then go right in to your questions. And I know you're eager to get after that so I won't delay this. First of all, SETAF, as some of you may know, stood up in Italy in 1955. And then for more than 50 years SETAF has deployed throughout Europe, Southwest Asia, and Africa, providing commanding control for contingency operations, crisis response, disaster relief, and humanitarian missions.

Since the 1990's SETAF has teamed with African nations as part of its operational focus. Again, I know many of you know this, but SETAF routinely conducted military to military training activities down in Africa and performed humanitarian relief operations in African countries such as Liberia, Rwanda, Uganda, Congo, and the former Zaire.

Now while SETAF has trained, exercised and deployed to Africa in the past, our focus and mission in Africa changed December 3rd when the announcement was made here in Rome by the Italian and U.S. governments that SETAF and I might also add Naval Forces Africa, would become the Army and Navy Components to U.S. Africa command.

Today as U.S. Army Africa we're the Army's premiere Army team -- American's premiere Army team I should say -- dedicated to achieving positive change on the continent.

Our transformation symbolizes America's enduring commitment to Africa. SETAF's mission as the Army Component to Africa Army Command is to act in concert with national and international partners and conduct sustained security engagement with African land forces to promote peace, stability, and security in Africa.

As directed we will deploy as a contingency headquarters in support of crisis response operations such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Now what all this means is that instead of simply responding to crises we will seek out opportunities to strengthen the capacity of African land forces and their institutions so they can prevent conflicts and contribute to peace.

Right now and over the next few years SETAF is learning, growing, and building capacity and capability to meet the requirements needed to coordinate all U.S. Army activities in Africa. And will build and strengthen relationships

with African Army organizations along with national, international partners in Africa to promote a stable and secure Africa.

This is an exciting time to be part of U.S. Army Africa, part of SETAF, and I'm proud to be part of this great team, again, a team like no other.

And with that I'll be more than happy to take your questions.

CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Okay. All right, sorry about that. I'm Jack Holt, I came in late. I had the wrong date, time on my calendar. MR. DILLON: Okay. Well that's all right Jack. I've taken the role as moderator and we've just finished opening remarks and we are opening to questions right now from those who are online with us.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. I'll step back and allow you to continue. Sorry about that.

MR. DILLON: Okay. Anyone have questions for General Garrett right now?

Q This is Jim Dolbow with the Naval Institute Blog.

MR. DILLON: Okay Jim, go ahead.

Q Good evening General. What is the role of the Army Reserve and National Guard within your command?

GEN. GARRETT: Well, the Army Guard and Reserve both offer capabilities that we desire to bring to bear in Africa. As I, as you may know, or may not, U.S. Army Africa has no assigned forces. I have a planning and contingency headquarters, a main command post, and a contingency command post. But our mission, our role is to bring to bear all the capabilities of the U.S. Army in Africa, active, guard, and reserve.

The guard and reserve both provide niche capabilities especially that we're interested in. And I'm talking about things like civil affairs teams. I'm talking about well-drilling units, those kind of things that you don't find in the active force.

There's also a very good state partnership, or series of state partnership programs we have in place in Africa and that's where the National Guard has teamed up with a country in Africa, essentially a twinning or pairing of a state with a country. And we have, as I recall, about a half dozen right now states that are signed on to partner with African countries. And the mechanism for that partnering is the National Guard. And we are very eager to grow that and gain more interest and participation in that partnership.

You might also note, just an anecdote, we've got a young captain, Captain Al Suffalo (sp) who is from the North Carolina Army National Guard and we have borrowed him for about five months. And we're going to put him on a ship, a U.S. Navy ship that's going to be operating around the littoral areas of Africa for the next five months. And he will be their civil affairs coordinator. Every time they roll in to port to do an activity this young Army captain is going to step forward and organize that effort. And while he's doing that he's also determining where we can come back later and provide a larger Army Africa effort to reinforce the activities down there.

So bottom line is the Guard and Reserve bring a great capability to bear and we're very, very excited about our new partnership with both organizations.

MR. DILLON: Thank you, General.

All right. Anyone else have a question?

Q This is Chuck Simmons from America's North Shore Journal. General, thank you for taking time to talk with us.

GEN. GARRETT: My pleasure.

Q In dealing with Africa you're dealing with an area that has been, frankly, largely ignored by the United States government State Department. I'm on the African Com site and they're, they have a one page that lists U.S. military involvement in Africa and it mostly involves evacuating people due to a coup or a revolution of some kind.

What kind of new skills, new approaches do you want to bring to Africa to kind of change this whole ignored -- (inaudible) -- we only go in there when there's a revolution picture that seems to exist right now?

GEN. GARRETT: That is a very good question. And I think I have an answer you're going to like which is the formation of the U.S. Africa Command headed up by General Ward is America's acknowledgement that Africa is rising in strategic importance. And what you're going to see that's different from the past, and is certainly true in the case of my command here at Army Africa, is you're going to see sustained security engagement, back to our mission statement, and this is essentially delivery of effective security cooperation programs. It's not episodic, flash in the pan, non-combative evacuation operation. It's sustained day-to-day engagement with our African partners. And, you know, American soldiers are great role models in terms of professionalism. They connect. I just had a Lieutenant Jones and Staff Sergeant Roose (sp) were down there in Rwanda. They moved on fairly short notice down there at the request of the Rwandan government to train their forces in air movement operations. Again, based on a need Rwanda had. Our two Officer and NCO went down there, did a superb job.

Liberia, for example, I'm sending two non-commission officers down there to help stand up a non-commission officer academy in Liberia. And they're working there as part of an AFRICOM effort. But again, the intent for that is a long-term approach to regional security.

We also have folks involved in the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Center in Ghana in terms of professional military education.

I have two officers in Ethiopia now in Addis Ababa teaching at the war college there. And the intent is to maintain all of that and grow this as we gain capability.

The beauty of it is we'll be able to bring to bear, you know, a, the effect of again, the active Guard and Reserve in Africa. And we're very excited about this because we're going to be doing it in a sustained way. We'll still maintain the ability to do non-combative evacuation operations or provide a

contingency headquarters in support of humanitarian --- foreign humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

But our main effort, our sustained, steady state operations now is going to be the sustained security engagement. That's never been done in Africa, as you know. And that is the big difference and the big change that you're going to see on the continent now. So we're very excited to be part of that.

And again, we're going to bring to bear a 21st century organization, U.S. Army Africa, it's a team like no other, there's no other organization like us out there and, quite frankly, with two wars and some tough economic times you're probably not going to see another organization like us devoted, from the Army's perspective, to Africa.

So we've got the lead for the Army. I am General Casey's representative to General Ward and to the commanders of land forces down in Africa and we take that responsibility, you know, to heart. And we look forward to making a positive difference there.

Q Thank you, sir.

GEN. GARRETT: Did that help at all?

Q Yeah, that was great.

GEN. GARRETT: Okay.

Q General, this is David Axe from War is Boring. Can you hear me okay?

GEN. GARRETT: David I can hear you fine.

Q Great, fantastic. So I've got a question about intelligence. Does your organization have, does U.S. Army Africa have an intelligence function?

GEN. GARRETT: We have an intelligence function but it's primarily related to anti-terrorism force protection. In other words, protection of our people while they're operating in Africa. That's the primary focus. Q I'm just wondering how you --- what capabilities you have just for keeping an eye on the big continent Africa is and, you know, a lot of stuff going on. How do you track all of that or is that not your responsibility specifically but rather, you know, the responsibility lies elsewhere with AFRICOM or some other partner organization?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah, you've hit it right on the head. AFRICOM is our primary provider of information about things that are going on in Africa. So we utilize that reach back capability daily.

Q Okay. But when it comes to, well for instance, you know, we've got something of an issue developing in Somalia. The Ethiopians have pulled out as of yesterday and the transitional government has been completely booted from the country and is up in Djibouti right now. How does that, for instance, how is, are you tracking that, I'm not going to say crisis, but that situation? And, I mean, is there any thought potential involvement there?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah we track every crisis on the continent. We're interested in it in some way, shape, or form. So we're watching all of them and like any, you know, organization we're going to take prudent measures to ensure we're ready, you know, if we're called upon. But right now we don't anticipate, obviously, any deployments in response to any of that. And we're just continuing to monitor and remain alert.

Q Okay, very good. To follow-up with a question about the lack of permanent forces, some folks have, I understand that European command expects to provide a lot of forces for AFRICOM. Are you at all worried about not having permanent forces in the, you know, resource constrained environment, getting the troops you need when you need them?

GEN. GARRETT: No, I'm actually not worried. I mentioned that we're, again my term, a 21st century organization. And what I mean by that, without sounding flip, is that the effects in Africa that we're kind of driving toward are really realized in a small unit or even individual level. And we do not want to introduce a large footprint into Africa, nor is it needed, quite frankly. And the ability of individual soldiers and teams and small units to deploy down there and support the Ambassador and country team, to support our African partners is what we're getting after here. It's not deployment of large forces, of large formations to Africa. That's kind of old thing.

MR. DILLON: Okay. Thank you very much.

Q General, Greg -- (inaudible) -- here from Military.com.

I just wondered if you could speak a bit to the numbers of folks you have there in your command and a little bit about the amount of time they actually spend on the continent versus in Europe. And also I'd be curious to hear about the relationship when you have special operations forces coming in to, into the command area who --- how does that command arrangement work out? And also, just quickly, how much, how dependent are you on contractors for some of the work you're doing on the continent?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah, right now the, our strength is about 300 folks here in the headquarters, plus or minus. The Army recognizes our current structure and size are inadequate. So we're going to continue to evolve, you know, over this next year and into 2010, both in our composition and structure. As we right size the organization and adjust to a new mission which moves us from a tactical to an operational level. So, the headquarters, again, about 300 right now, continuing to evolve. That's a mixture of military and civilian.

Contractor requirements, we see that potentially increasing but not in any significant numbers.

In terms of our relationship with special operations forces, again, as the Army Component we're providing individuals and small teams down in Africa to do work at the request of the host country and the ambassador and country team. There may be some parallel relationship with, for example, a Special Forces team that might be training someone in a country. But typically, we are working in areas that they're not. In other words, we're focused on conventional forces and helping our partners achieve, you know, the level of proficiency they're looking for in their conventional forces.

The Special Forces folks, again, working to train SOF equivalent elements in Africa.

Q There's quite a discussion going on about the advisory role the Army should play in going forward and just whether that expertise resides in the Army or does it. You know, it's kind of been a traditional Special Forces mission -- the foreign military training.

I just wanted to get your sense of how your soldiers are doing on that, what kind of needs you may see going forward. GEN. GARRETT: Yeah. The Army strategy, published in August of 2008, specifically assigns securities force assistance to conventional forces. And what that means is my job is to bring the conventional side of the U.S. -- again, active Guard and Reserve -- to bear in Africa in support of conventional land forces, conventional security forces in Africa. So it is now an assigned mission to the conventional Army to be able to do this.

More pointedly, though, to your question: The NCOs and officers we've got now in my headquarters are certainly very capable and they've already made a fairly dramatic impact in some places. But my preference is to kind of hang onto them here, allow them to rotate down to the continent to gain experience and to gain some situation and cultural awareness. But quite frankly, our role is to bring to bear the rest of the Army, as required by our host nations and our ambassadors and country teams, to operate and train in Africa.

Q Are you --

GEN. GARRETT: Did that help or any follow up on that?

Q Yeah, just quickly. The language and cultural skills -- how are you able to tap into that across, you know, Army-wide? Do you have the ability to go out and find people that bring those skills to bear?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah, that is an outstanding question. In fact, it's one we're going to address with TRADOC. As we have stood up this new command in Africa now, the bigger Army has to begin to coming to grips with how do you provide some kind of, you know, language skill? How do you provide cultural understanding or awareness in our soldiers? And the other things that they need to know before they deploy into Africa for a training mission or an advisory mission or to participate in an exercise? And we're working TRADOC and headquarters, Department of the Army, to kind of put those things in place.

As you know, nobody has ever done this in the past. It's been split between Central Command, Pacific Command and European Command. And that's the beauty of AFRICOM. It brings coherence to the continent. And in this case, coherence to the continent means that the U.S. Army now will begin to line itself up in terms of its training and education so that our soldiers deploy into Africa with the requisite skills and the cultural awareness that they need to be successful there -- again, in support of our host countries and African partners and the ambassadors and their country teams.

Q Great. Thank you.

MR. DILLON: We've got time for one more question, and then -- correction -- two more questions if they're out there. And then we'll go to closing remarks for General Garrett. Anyone have final questions?

Q This is Chuck again.

General, are we playing catch up to the Chinese in Africa?

GEN. GARRETT: I don't think we're -- Chuck, I don't think we're playing catch up with them at all.

The interaction that we've got with them is very little at this point. And certainly, if they're doing good things on the continent in terms of providing humanitarian assistance, we're certainly behind that.

At the strategic level, you know, I think you'd probably be best directing that question to the folks in Washington.

Q Thank you.

MR. DILLON: Okay. Final question.

Q This is Jim Dolbow with the Naval Institute Blog again.

General, what's your relationship with the U.S. public health service and NGO's like Project Hope and Operation Smile?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah, great question.

One of the things we're trying to do is build relationships now with organizations that are operating and connecting business in Africa to include nongovernment organizations, humanitarian organizations of all types.

Of course, being a military organization, there's going to be some that are resistant to our outreach and that's entirely understandable. But General Ward has charged us with doing no harm, in terms of interfering with activities in Africa that are being conducted by nongovernment organizations, or other U.S. government agencies and organizations.

So we are very careful in that regard as we move forward. But in many cases, we're trying to get after the same ends in terms of bringing positive change to Africa. And where we can partner, we're certainly interested in doing that. And likewise, we absolutely respect and understand the nongovernment organizations that have no desire to associate with a military organization.

I'll take any more questions if you've got them, folks.

Q Yeah, General, Greg Grant here again.

Senator Clinton -- well, actually, now Secretary of State Clinton -- laid out some pretty ambitious goals for AFRICOM recently, including stopping the war in Congo and ending the human devastation in Darfur. I just wondered -- and this may be way above your pay grade -- but how do you see the Army and AFRICOM playing a role in kind of addressing those goals?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah. This is Greg, right?

Q Yeah.

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah, Greg, have you heard of the term "smart power"? I think she --

Q Yeah, certainly. Yeah.

GEN. GARRETT: Which is a combination of defense, diplomacy and development. And we think that is exactly the environment we find ourselves operating in down there. And I think what Senator Clinton did was essentially put a title on something we are doing in terms of understanding that in many, many cases we're going to play a supporting role to another U.S. government agency or we're going to be a junior partner in a multinational operation -- for example, in response to humanitarian disaster -- and we're very comfortable with that.

And I know that Senator Clinton recognizes that even when we cannot fully agree with some governments in Africa, we share a bond of humanity with their people. And from our point of view, by investing in that common humanity, we can advance our common security.

So I haven't seen the exact policy outline from President Obama's administration yet. That'll come to me through General Ward, but I do know that things are going to adjust, as you would expect in any administration. And we're prepared for that.

I would also like to say that in my experience in Africa, the U.S. does seem to enjoy widespread support in public opinion polls in many African countries to include -- let's see, I was in Mali recently. And Mali is, I believe, about 98 percent Muslim. And the U.S. popularity rating down there was in the 70s, as I recall -- so very high.

Again, I think the idea of smart power and working together with diplomacy, development and defense is the way to go. And I'm very grateful to Secretary Clinton for putting a title on something we're doing.

Q General, just curious: What percentage of the time do you actually spend on the continent -- you personally?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah. This upcoming year, because 2009 really ushers in our first year as U.S. Army Africa, I will spend about 50 percent of my time literally on the continent. We've devoted about two weeks out of every month for me personally to be down there. I still have responsibilities back here in Italy as the senior Army commander in Italy. And that uses up a lot of my other time.

Q Thanks.

MR. DILLON: Okay. Any more questions out there?

Q General, Chuck Simmons again.

Africa has traditionally been an interest of European allies of ours -- the French and the Belgians. And currently, the Spanish and the Italians have an immigration problem from Africa.

Can you talk about any instances where we're working with our European allies down there as part of the whole smart power sustained security engagement program?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah, Chuck, as I answer the question, let me begin with just a kind of a comment: Here in Vicenza, Italy, we have right next door to us -- literally in the same city -- we have the Center of Excellence for Stability

Police Units. The acronym is COESPU -- c-o-e-s-p-u. Again, Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units.

And that is the outgrowth of an agreement between the United States and Italy at the G-8 conference. And this is a campus here in Vicenza that's run by the Carabinieri, the Italian military police, if you will -- paramilitary. And they train -- educate and train stability police units from across Africa and also Europe.

And this is a fantastic organization. It's funded by the State Department -- the U.S. State Department -- to the tune of about 10 million (dollars) a year. It's extremely high payoff, because we get moving through here both senior leaders and middle-grade leaders from police units, security units and land forces down in Africa. And they go through these classes and courses and then they're able to fold back into their units and share what they've learned. And the only requirement coming out of this is that the countries that participate in the program here must also agree to participate in peacekeeping operations across Africa.

So it's a phenomenal success. It's an Italian-U.S. success and it illustrates the common goals and objectives that we've all got down in Africa. And we have lots of interest from our European partners in what we're doing, offers to provide liaisons to our headquarters, discussions about achieving a common approach down in Africa on some operations and some training and education. So we see just a very healthy approach down there and are very gratified that our European allies and partners are onboard with us.

Q Thank you.

Q Greg Grant again. General, when your officers and NCOs deploy, it obviously sounds like their aim is to maintain a very small footprint. Are they just -- are they kind of embedded, if you will, with the local forces? Did the local embassy provide support? How does that work?

GEN. GARRETT: Yeah. It's a little bit of a combination and it's dependent upon the situation, but clearly, the embassy is going to make sure that they're getting the life support kind of things that they need. Most of the work that our guys do in support of our African partners is actually boots on the ground, out on the field kind of thing. So they're moving and operating out there, in most cases, with the host nation forces.

We do have some folks participating in PME -- Professional Military Education -- where they're instructors at schools and colleges. And obviously, they're in a different environment and wind up in, you know, being treated differently by both the host nation military and the embassy.

So you kind of have two different levels going on in parallel. One at a pretty high level, in terms of the education piece; and one at a little bit lower level in terms of the training and advising that's going on out there.

One thing we're particularly proud of, though, is our participating with AFRICOM. And this is an AFRICOM-led effort on the part of Command Sergeant Major Mark Ripka. He's the AFRICOM command sergeant major. Command Sergeant Major Ripka has put together a program to assist the Liberians in standing up a regional noncommissioned officer academy. And that's going to provide a fantastic, again, outcome for any of the participants down there. And we're

very pleased and happy to be invited to play on that and they're going to make sure we support it 100 percent.

Q How many personnel do you have there currently -- down on the continent itself?

GEN. GARRETT: We have about 600 U.S. Army personnel engaged across Africa right now.

Q What's the largest, team, if you will? What's the largest group?

GEN. GARRETT: The largest group of them would be in support of Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, and that's about 400 people.

Q Great. Thank you.

Q General, this is Jim Dolbow with Naval Institute Blog again.

Could you give us some anecdotes about how your command is winning the hearts and minds of the African people? GEN. GARRETT: Well, I think the real deal is you ask the customer. And you know, what do they think, not what we think. And the feedback we've gotten has been tremendous.

I don't have any official surveys that I can share with you right now but I can just tell you that everywhere I go I get invitations to come back. I get e-mails constantly from leaders that I meet. And again, the feedback that we've gotten both formerly and informally on our soldiers that we've deployed to Rwanda -- for example, Lieutenant Jones, (Sergeant Ruse ?), has been outstanding. The folks we've got in Liberia, although they've just arrived, are already getting thumbs up from the folks there.

And again, I just think if you ask the customer, that's where you get the true answer. And thus far, all the feedback has been very, very positive.

Q Are you getting more requests than you can handle?

GEN. GARRETT: At this time, yes.

Okay, what else, folks?

Okay, let me give you a closing statement here real quick and we'll wrap it up.

First, let me just thank you for all -- for your participating today. And I value the importance of what you do as bloggers. And I've got to tell you, I'm one of those workers who reads some of this and I have participated kind of behind the scenes on some of it. But as I've stated before, this is really an exciting time to be part of U.S. Army Africa, part of SETAF.

And I truly believe that we are well suited for this mission. I described us a 21st century organization, a team like no other. I think we are. I think we'll make a positive difference both for our nation and for the people of Africa.

If you want to keep up with what we're doing, I strongly recommend you go to www.setaf.army.mil. That's SETAF -- s-e-t-a- f.army.mil. If you go there, you'll find stories, photos and a lot of information -- including some of

the things I've just talked about in terms of what we're accomplishing in Africa.

If you look out into the future, as the U.S. Army comes to grip with supporting U.S. Africa Command, I think you're going to see, again, a very positive impact on the continent and on our future down in Africa.

Again, thanks for your interest and I look forward to seeing your blogs on the Internet. Q Thank you so much, General.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you, General.

MR. DILLON: All right, Jack, are you still on?

MR. HOLT: Yes, I am.

MR. DILLON: Okay. Anything else we need to do to close this out?

MR. HOLT: Nope, that's it. I apologize for being late. It was marked wrong on my schedule. I had it up as 9:30 to 10:00. So I do apologize for that, but it sounded like everything went well. And a lot of good stuff from that.

MR. DILLON: Okay. Appreciate it. Again, thanks for support and we'll look at doing this in the future -- not necessarily with General Garrett, but perhaps some others as we move and start getting into some exercises on the continent and some other topics.

MR. HOLT: All right. That'd be great. It might be good to consider maybe having Sergeant Major Ripka come on and talk about the NCO academy. It might be one of the topics for the future.

MR. DILLON: That's a great point and I will bring that up with the Africa Command public affairs team and see how they feel about it, but I will definitely raise that up to them.

MR. HOLT: Okay, great!

MR. DILLON: Again, thanks a lot, Jack. And thanks for your e-mail on the New Media stuff. I may give you a call later on to dig in a little bit more.

MR. HOLT: Okay, great. Good stuff.

MR. DILLON: Appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Thanks.

END.